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ABSTRACT

Designed to enhance curriculum building for educators who wish to introduce into their classrooms some ideas about Asian philosophy and spirituality, this annotated bibliography centers on Eastern traditions emphasizing holistic or universal consciousness. The bibliography of multicultural literature highlighting holism in the writings of Eastern and Western spirituality presents an alternative to the longstanding trend toward dualistic Anglo-European cultural hegemony in Western education and offers a fresh perspective for interested teachers. Listings are categorized as fiction or nonfiction, with critical discussions of books and materials, and recommendations for classroom use. The six books listed under "fiction" were published between 1955 and 1991. The 11 books listed under "nonfiction" were published between 1977 and 1990. The themes presented in the bibliography can be included in units addressing holistic awareness, respect and compassion for others, environmental preservation through oneness with nature, and other themes, and can be introduced into language arts, social studies, history, or other subject areas by teachers seeking new ideas in values clarification and multicultural instruction. (NKA)

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The Spiritual Traditions of the East: A Bibliography for Elementary and Middle School Teachers

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Introduction

With the recent increase in Asian migration to North America and Europe, and the growing interest in Oriental cultures occurring in the West, the need for books and other classroom materials by and about Asians is greater than ever. Areas of special fascination to many Westerners are Asian philosophy and spirituality. Some Western educators are beginning to address the issue of how to introduce these subjects into the classroom through various teaching techniques (Swain 1974; Moffett 1989; Roberts 1989). But little has been done specifically in the area of curriculum building. Thus bibliographies, anthologies and lesson units on the theme of Asian philosophical and spiritual traditions are in order.

The present bibliography, which is targeted for the elementary and middle school levels, centers on Eastern traditions emphasizing holistic or universal consciousness---the perception of the oneness of all matter, energy and phenomena in the universe. As Moffett (1989) points out, similar traditions have arisen in the West. In fact, one such philosophy, Freemasonry, permeated the lives and thinking of our founding fathers. But these traditions have been ignored or even suppressed by factions that view them as threatening. For instance, both Western atheists and

mainstream Christians have "suppress[ed] the role of [the] spiritual brotherhood that has been a rival, been regarded as heretical, and been accused of conspiring to overthrow family, church, and state. This bias has excluded from our common knowledge [the] unorthodox spirituality that our founders infused into American society and that the present New Age stress on universal consciousness is attempting to revive" (Moffett 1989, pp. 71-72).

Teaching students about Eastern traditions that emphasize universal oneness can help reduce wariness and answer questions about Asians, expand awareness of the nature of existence, and reduce intercultural misunderstanding and misuse of the global environment. As Moffett (1989) states, "the exclusivity of cultures is so dangerous that each must build into itself the means of transcending itself. The deepest spiritual teachings in all cultures have tried to do this but in so doing seem subversive" (p. 87). Thus to counter the long-standing trend toward dualistic Anglo-European cultural hegemony in Western education, more stress needs to be placed on multicultural literature emphasizing holism, such as the writings of Eastern and Western spirituality.

Hatley (1991) supports this argument but takes it one step further, asserting that the modern divisive worldview "has brought us to a critical point in human development, suggesting the need for some type of holistic, participating consciousness to resolve [the] historical dualism wrought by the Scientific Revolution of the 17th century" (p. 3). Hatley (1991) also suggests that a paradigm shift is beginning to occur in Western education toward more unitive ways of knowing and teaching: "The implications of such a paradigm shift for education researchers and classroom teachers is

tremendous, as these emergent ideas challenge the foundations of inquiry and knowledge construction, offer a new language base, and suggest the availability of a new range of conceptual tools for thinking in fresh ways about learning, children, schools and curriculum" (p. 3).

But she adds that, although many of the ideas of holistic educators offer a fresh perspective, "the philosophical and critical foundations of holism have not been sufficiently developed" (Hatley 1991, p. 3). The bibliography to follow is a step toward laying these foundations. Listings are categorized into fiction and nonfiction subgroupings, with critical discussions of books and materials, and recommendations for classroom use. Items were chosen for inclusion based on their reflection of (1) the principles of holism or universal consciousness discussed above, and (2) an East or South Asian perspective (because of the recent influx from and interest in these areas currently occurring in the West).

Fiction

Roberts, Moss. (Trans. & Ed.). *Chinese fairy tales & fantasies.* New York: Random House, 1980. 260 pp.

The tales in this collection blend the daily lives of mortals, the fabulous kingdom of birds and beasts, and the cosmic realm of gods and spirits. They reflect the traditional Chinese Confucian social order (which was highly structured), through the hierarchical relationships found in their story lines. The distinctive quality of these tales is that they also present the alternate social and spiritual voice of Taoism---a tradition that opposed Confucianism and viewed oneness with nature and universal

consciousness as the true goals of human existence.

This anthology can be used in the classroom to illustrate the basic commonality of all living beings through discussion of various pieces by Taoist writers such as Chuang Tzu. According to the translator, these stories can help a student "imagine how the human and animal realms are part of the same whole." Many of the tales can also be used to show connections between Taoism, Buddhism, and other traditions such as Native American spirituality, that adhere to a unitive view of reality, and compassion and tolerance toward all living things.

Beck, Brenda; Claus, Peter; Prahuldatta, Goswami & Handoo, Jawarhalal. *Folktales of India*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1989. 357 pp.

This volume contains an engaging and well produced anthology of folklore covering the length and breadth of India. Its stories were collected in the field by ethnographers, and thus reflect the living oral tradition of the subcontinent. Some of the stories are exclusive to India, but many are variants of tales found in Aesop, Chaucer and the Brothers Grimm.

Thus the collection can be used in class to demonstrate the universality of various archetypal themes across the world's cultures, connections between India and other civilizations, and certain distinctive features of the Indian worldview. As in the Chinese tales discussed above, characters in these stories often move between human, animal and divine forms, and so reinforce once again for students the inherent oneness of all life and energy in the universe.

This "transmigration" is especially prominent among females in the

stories, who often appear in semimagical roles and triumph against great odds by combining moral courage and spiritual dedication. As the editors state, "these heroines often are in touch with extrahuman forces. Thus they are linked with other realms of being." This linkage stems from traditional respect for the feminine, which Indians view as primary and essential to all forms of life in the universe. It can be used by teachers to show how individuals can transcend stereotypical role categories, and attain holistic awareness. To quote the editors again, "universal human characteristics will come across to readers in subtle ways. Important abstract issues can be discussed using these materials."

Gaer, Joseph. *The fables of India*. Boston: Little Brown, 1955. 177 pp.

This anthology contains animal stories derived from three written Indian sources: The Panchatantra, or Book of Five Headings, the Hitopadesa, or Book of Good Counsel, and the Jatakas, or Book of Buddha's Birth Stories. It can be used in conjunction with the collection by Beck and Claus discussed above to show the similarities and differences among various stories from India's living oral tradition (Beck & Claus) and its written tradition (Gaer). A teacher can also use it to point out similarities among Asian Indian tales and fables from other cultures such as that of Western Europe or the Native Americans. Like the stories collected by Beck and Claus, these fables reflect the Indian preoccupation with holism or unitive views of nature and reality. They treat topics like the Buddha's rebirth into a number of living forms, and love and caring for all living things.

Martin, Rafe. (Ed.). *The hungry tigress and other traditional Asian tales.* Boston: Shambhala, 1991. 153 pp.

Like the anthologies discussed above, this book contains tales from the Indian tradition. They are derived largely from the Jatakas, or tales of Buddha's various incarnations, and thus like virtually all Indian folklore, reflect a holistic or cosmic perspective: "Time is measured on a grand, incalculably vast, cosmic scale. The reality of countless past, and future, lifetimes is tacitly assumed. One hears of other worlds and realms. One may encounter other kinds of beings. All living beings communicate, have moral and spiritual struggles, [and] seem to spring from a common ground." Thus they can be used alone or in conjunction with the collections mentioned above to illustrate a cultural/spiritual perspective which, while acknowledging pain and suffering, expresses both a deep commitment to compassion and a pervasive respect for all living things. As suggested for the collections above, the stories also can be used in class to draw comparisons among the Indian and other cosmically oriented cultures.

Hyde-Chambers, Frederick & Hyde-Chambers, Audrey. (Eds). *Tibetan folk tales.* Boston: Shambhala, 1981. 186 pp.

The legends and tales included in this collection are derived mainly from firsthand sources. They reflect the powerful influence of Buddhism in Tibetan life through their transmission of spiritual values and representation of worldly existence as fleeting and ephemeral. In the spiritual traditions of Tibet, faith is not blind acceptance of a divine being separate from oneself, but rather a dynamic, unshakeable belief in

the ability of all beings to attain enlightenment, or oneness with universal consciousness.

Thus the stories in this collection present animals, everyday people and various spiritual personages on the path to spiritual unfoldment. They can be used to show the connections between Tibet and other cultures in Asia, as well as the relationships between various forms of life in the great cosmic web. Tibetan culture has some fascinating ties to Native American culture as well, such as the fact that both traditions use sand painting as a form of spiritual art. These ties can be brought out and discussed in class through the reading of these stories.

Mui, Y. T. *Seven Magic Orders*. Hong Kong: Island Heritage. 1973, 40 pp.

Like the traditional Chinese story collection described earlier, this powerfully illustrated fable by a modern Chinese writer reflects a Taoist theme---the interplay of Yin (representing passivity, darkness, negativity, etc.) and Yang (representing activity, light, positive energy, etc.) in the pursuit of balance or wholeness. A temptress and a fierce demon are related to Yin. A strong warrior, a virtuous woman, a good emperor, a wise sage and true love are related to Yang. These forces vie for supremacy in the tale, and the characteristics of faith, obedience, kindness, and love are the hero's source of personal power. The story is a modern excursion into the philosophy of ancient China, which emphasized immersion in virtue and compassionate behavior as refuges against evil and strife. It can be incorporated into a unit on Asian beliefs and values, or used as part of a lesson on universal themes in world cultures.

Landaw, Jonathan & Brooke, Janet. *Prince Siddhartha: The story of Buddha.* Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1987. 144 pp.

This account of the life of Siddhartha Gautama, the young prince who later became known as the Buddha is a story of peace, fearlessness and love. Prince Siddhartha grew up in the lap of luxury, sheltered by his father from ever seeing suffering. But as a young man he saw for the first time sickness, old age and death and was forever changed, realizing that he was meant to study spirituality and find enlightenment.

This story can be used to teach about the spiritual search in which everyone is engaged, whether they know it or not. It can also be used to discuss the nature of life, aging, and the meaning of death and transition into the next life. The book's stirring narrative and vivid illustrations bring the period of the young Buddha alive and can inspire students to think about abstract notions such as spirituality.

Mann, Shiah. *Chinese new year.* New York: ARTS, Inc., 1988, 32.

This little book was designed to help non-Chinese readers understand the real meaning of the Chinese New Year Season, beyond the stereotyped images of paper dragons and fire crackers popular in the West. It may be used by teachers to demonstrate the nature of the Lunar Calendar, which can be presented as a system rooted in nature's cycles, and indicative of attunement with cosmic energies and rhythms. The book includes sections on traditional Chinese spiritual beliefs and the Chinese Lunar Calendar, which are both rooted in nature and the universe, and thus

reflect the theme of holism or oneness. Comparisons with the Western solar calendar can be made and related to the contrasting views of nature and life in East and West.

Waters, Kate & Slovenz-Low, Madeline. *Lion Dancer: Ernie Wan's Chinese New Year.* New York: Scholastic, Inc, 1990. 16 pp.

Ernie Wan is six years old and the son of a kung fu master. He lives in New York's Chinatown with his family. This is the story of the most important day in Ernie's young life, for he is to perform his first Lion Dance at a Chinese New Year celebration. The book offers a fascinating glimpse into ancient Chinese customs and may be used in conjunction with the Chinese New Year book discussed above. It reflects the respectful view toward nature and other human beings that traditional Chinese culture holds dear. Thus it can be integrated into a unit on the compassionate and environmentally conscious spiritual traditions of the East, or a unit on multicultural holidays reflecting holistic themes.

Tatz, Mark & Kent, Jody. *Rebirth: The Tibetan Game of Liberation.* New York: Doubleday, 1977. 231 pp.

This package consists of a book containing background information and instructions and a multi-colored board game that students can use to learn about the map of the universe or "cosmic geography" according to Tibetan Buddhism. Each square on the board represents a stage of spiritual development, or enlightenment. With each roll of the die, a player progresses on these squares toward *nirvana*---a happy state of oneness with the universe, or descends toward various less desirable realms of

being. Besides the Buddhist map of the world, the game teaches children about values and ethics by showing the consequences of various actions and the way to happiness and spiritual fulfillment.

Gibb, Christopher. *The Dalai Lama: The exiled leader of the people of Tibet and tireless worker for world peace.* Milwaukee: Gareth Stevens Children's Books, 1990. 68 pp.

The Dalai Lama is a living example of the Buddhist ideals of compassion and love for all living beings. Thus this informative book on his life and the culture of Tibet in modern times can help teachers demonstrate the nature of the universal principles of brotherhood, understanding and oneness through the biography of a contemporary world figure. It is well-produced and contains numerous color and black-and-white pictures that bring the culture of Tibet alive, as well as narratives explaining Buddhist ideas of morality, spirituality and enlightenment.

Rawding, F. W. *The Buddha.* Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1984. 48 pp.

This book is considered *the* basic children's book on the life of the Buddha. It contains a wealth of illustrations on ancient Indian civilizations, Buddha's life, and existing Buddhist art, temples, and shrines. As the author says, Buddha's "achievement lies in the fact that hundreds of millions of people to this day have found in his explanations and advice an answer to the difficulties and disappointments of life." Thus *The Buddha* can be used to demonstrate the universal principles of "right living" and universal compassion that this great spiritual leader taught,

the commonalities between his teachings and those of Western spiritual teachers, and the values and ethics that are reflected in all the world's great spiritual traditions.

An, Jiang. *Chinese word book.* Honolulu: Bess Press. 1990, 95 pp.

The Chinese language uses a pictographic alphabet. Pictographic scripts are said to represent things and ideas more concretely than linear, phonetic scripts such as the Roman script used for English, because they are closer to pictures or images. This book presents many common Chinese characters along with illustrations to demonstrate their meaning. It can be used to show how a pictographic language like Mandarin Chinese depicts nature and concepts in a graphic, artful manner. It can also be used to show how the picture-like Chinese characters reflect aspects of Chinese culture, such as oneness with nature and the cosmos. Comparisons among various alphabets across the world can also be made, along with discussions of the various cultures involved and their ways of thinking and acting.

Weber, Andy & Wellings, Nigel. *Tara's colouring book.* Boston: Wisdom Books. 1984, 12 line drawings.

This is a book of twelve line drawings of some of the most notable figures from Tibetan art. The Buddha, Tara (a female figure representing compassion and other virtues), and others are represented, together with scenes from their life stories and explanations of the meaning of each picture. The authors provide detailed instructions on how to prepare the drawings for painting or coloring, the appropriate use of color according

to traditional Tibetan painting practices, and so on. It can be an effective addition to lessons on various forms of spiritual art, world cultures, or similar themes. Painting or coloring in the book can also serve as a springboard for discussions on the virtues and qualities that the figures represent, such as love for all people, oneness with nature, critical thinking, and the like.

Gibb, Christopher. *The land of the snows: History of Tibet Book 1.* Boston: Wisdom Books. 1984, 94 pp.

This is an easy-to-read illustrated book for children that summarizes the history and culture of Tibet, a land whose people have been called the most spiritual in the world. It can be employed in a thematic unit on spiritual traditions, with comparisons being drawn between Tibetan and Native American cultures. Teachers can discuss similarities between Native American and Tibetan social, linguistic and spiritual systems, such as the links between Tibetan and some of the Indian languages of the Southwest. Connections can also be made between these cultures in areas like their mutual respect for all living things and their practices aimed at attaining oneness with nature and the universal energy. Such comparisons can also be made between Tibet and other holistically oriented cultures such as that of the ancient Celts of Europe.

Gibb, Christopher. Independence to exile: History of Tibet Book 2. 1987, 94 pp.

This volume is the sequel to *Land of the Snows* . It brings children up to date on Tibetan history by describing the arrival of Tibetan refugees in

northern India. It can be used in the classroom in ways similar to those discussed above for *Land of the Snows.*

Barker, Carol. *Ananda in Sri Lanka.* Boston: Wisdom Books. 1985, 36 pp.

This is the beautifully illustrated story of Ananda, a twelve-year-old boy who lives in Sri Lanka. It demonstrates how the Buddhist way of life permeates all aspects of daily existence, and explains to young readers the principles of Buddhist spirituality and values, such as holistic consciousness. It can be employed in lesson units on comparative systems of belief or values across the world, multicultural views on holism and respect for nature, or similar themes.

Conclusion

As Shields (1989) points out, "modern education has placed its emphasis on material advancement to the exclusion of the most important aspect of education: the spiritual aspect. The aim of education for children should be self-realization and the realization of spiritual values" (p. 45). If the current materialistic, alienating trend in education is to be challenged, more emphasis needs to be placed on open-minded study of spiritual traditions and values in contemporary classrooms. Multicultural materials on spirituality such as those presented in this bibliography can be included in units addressing holistic awareness, respect and compassion for others, environmental preservation through oneness with

nature, and other themes.

Such themes can be introduced into language arts, social studies, history or other subject areas. Modeling by teachers of compassionate ways of relating to others, respect for animals, and similar behaviors is also part of the process of developing more sensitivity to spiritual issues. This collection of materials is offered as an adjunct to such modeling and as a source of inspiration for teachers seeking new ideas in values clarification and multicultural instruction.

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